



DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

News Release

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UNEMPLOYMENT DROPS TO 3.0 PERCENT

HONOLULU - The Hawaii State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations announced today that the statewide unemployment rate in February was 3.0 percent, a decline of 0.7 percentage point over January's unemployment rate of 3.7 percent. It marked the fifth consecutive month that the statewide unemployment rate was below 4 percent. The labor force in February comprised of 576,400 employed and 17,700 unemployed workers.

Nationally, the unemployment rate experienced little change, going from 6.5 percent in January to 6.4 percent in February. In February 2002, the national unemployment rate was 6.1 percent while Hawaii's unemployment rate stood significantly lower at 4.7 percent.

In another measure of employment, total non-agricultural payroll jobs in Hawaii increased by 3,900 in February over January for a total count of 564,650.

Seasonal factors accounted for most of the job gains within industry sectors. State government employment expanded by

(more)

2,900, as state education added 2,500 jobs due to the beginning of the spring public school schedule. Secondly, staffing at the legislature also contributed to the rise in state government. At private schools and colleges, seasonality resulted in an increase of 1,000 jobs in educational services.

Outside of seasonal expansion in education, two other industry sectors experienced notable increases in employment. The health care and social assistance industry grew by 600 jobs, in part due to a residual amount of striking nurses returning to work, while construction, still boosted by a strong residential market, added 400 jobs.

Significant job losses within industries were limited to a small handful of industry sectors. Continued trimming of holiday season workers caused the retail trade industry to cut 900 jobs, with general merchandise stores bearing the bulk of the job cuts. As the return of striking nurses continued, the remaining replacement health workers from employment services firms were dropped from payrolls, accounting for a sizeable portion of the decline of 400 jobs in the administrative, support, and waste management industry group. Also, information, which includes publishing industries, motion picture and sound recording industries, broadcasting, and telecommunications, lost 200 jobs.

"It is encouraging to see that we continue to do better than the national unemployment rate, thanks in large part to the increase of jobs in the construction, health care and social assistance industries," said Nelson Befitel, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations.

"While the State has yet to see a significant impact on unemployment resulting from the conflict in Iraq, we remain

cautiously optimistic that our economy has stabilized to a point that we will be able to minimize the effects of the conflict."

During the 1991 Gulf War, 4,300 jobs were lost primarily, in the tourist related industries.

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UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (not seasonally adjusted)

	FEB 2003	JAN 2003	FEB 2002
STATE	3.0	3.7	4.7
HONOLULU*	2.7	3.4	4.4
HAWAII COUNTY	4.2	5.0	5.5
KAUAI	3.8	4.6	6.5
MAUI COUNTY	3.1	3.7	5.1
Maui Island	3.0	3.7	5.1
Molokai	6.1	7.6	6.0
Lanai	2.4	1.6	3.8
U. S.	6.4	6.5	6.1

* City & County of Honolulu

COMPARATIVE RATES - U. S. AND HAWAII

